

STRICTURES

ON A

PAMPHLET,

PUBLISHED BY A MINORITY

OF THE

EASTERN SUBORDINATE SYNOD,

OF THE

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

BY ROBERT GIBSON,

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“ Paul, thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus.”—Acts.

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STRICTURES

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
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STRICTURES.



It must be distressing to every lover of Zion, to see divisions in the church of God. Still more so, to find christian professors and christian ministers turn their weapons against each other, and that with all the bitterness of partizans, and without respect to personal character. Opposition from the world is to be expected, and, sometimes, even a mean personal assault of character, both ungenerous and unjust, is looked for, where men choose to lay aside manhood, and condescend to any thing for the support of party. Still, the good sense of a thinking community will ultimately frown upon a course so opposed to the law of kindness.

This document does not profess to be written in the kindest language. It is intended to repel an ungenteel and unchristian attack made upon an injured man and minister of God's sanctuary, as well as that of his brethren, who are misrepresented in a pamphlet sanctioned by a minority of synod, consisting of six ministers and six ruling elders.

The occasion of the following remarks and animadversions, is, the circulation of a pamphlet, entitled "An original draft of a Pastoral Address," and having an appendix of sixteen pages, containing notes, one of which is particularly offensive. This pamphlet is industriously circulated through the various congregations in the connection of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

In about a week after this publication saw the light, a paragraph appeared in the Christian Expositor, under the editorial head, of which the following is an extract.

"With one or two exceptions of minor importance, we are pleased with the whole production, and the course of policy which it advocates. It is worthy of the high reputation of its learned author. And as further illustrated by the notes, it

“exhibits a view of the moral character of the American government—of the relations of our ecclesiastical community to the civil institutions of our country—and of the church’s legislation upon these subjects, which has our cordial approbation.” See *Expositor*, vol. 2, No. 2, page 75.

In the following page the editor remarks—“If the principles which it (original Synodical Address) advocates, are obnoxious to any, let such employ the weapons of honour, reason, and christianity, in opposing them. But *henceforth*, let the indefinite charges of apostacy—the hinting crimination of motive—and the intangible insinuations calculated to destroy confidence, and whisper ministerial and private character to ruin, be left for those who are sufficiently degraded to employ “them.”

In the above paragraph there does appear something like *whispering ministerial and private character to ruin* in the use of the word “henceforth;” but we give credit to the author or authors of note B. page 26th, Original Draft, for ceasing to whisper, and *more magnanimously* slandering openly.

By the introduction, pages 3d and 4th, it appears that only part of that address had been sanctioned by the Eastern Synod—that the minority had published the entire address on their own responsibility—and that notes were to be added, explanatory of the instrument, on the same responsibility. As the whole minority of synod was to be held responsible for the notes and explanations, it was confidently expected that something dignified, manly, and christian, would be published under the sanction of twelve Presbyters, forming that minority; but how great was our astonishment to find, under note B. page 20th, an Essay of Dr. Willson, entitled “Prince Messiah,” introduced, and a *low, personal* attack made upon his character as a man under the influence of derangement.

Both the rejected part of the address, and the notes (intended to give “*a definite location to the allusions of the Address,*”) hold him up as the leader of *thoughtless men of a party—distracting the church—teaching novel doctrines—novel practices—being new light pedlars—disorganizers—possessed of infuriate zeal—having their party shibboleth—holding vital godliness and moral worth as but minor considerations—as a people who are happily prevented from daring to use any other sword than that of the mouth—men of manufactured consciences, &c. &c.* Their leader, Dr.

Willson, is represented as insane—an aspiring Diotraphes—a fanatic—leader of a shibboleth party—of disorganizing new light pedlars—and his doctrines as being the illiberal vagaries of insanity and fanaticism, &c. while as to themselves (modest men!) they are “the sober, discreet, temperate, and intelligent part of the brethren—men of vital godliness and moral worth.”

Such seems to be an outline of the three characters brought forward on the arena of public conflict, as either *explicitly stated* in the address and notes, or plainly *insinuated*. Viewing the matter in this light, the writer of this document thought that the interests of religion generally, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and of an oppressed and abused man, demanded that a few animadversions should be, if possible, as extensively circulated as the above pamphlet, to correct the misrepresentation, and repel the ungentle attack made upon a respectable minister of Jesus Christ.

The very fact of publishing the rejected part of the Synodical Address seems objectionable. Not that there is any objection to men publishing on their own responsibility. The freedom of the press is an invaluable blessing; but it may be abused. In this case it certainly has been. Something is due to an ecclesiastical court on the ground of courtesy. Where a court has not assailed the reputation of the writer or writers of a document, nor impugned their motives; but where it has deliberately thought a document was uncalled for, or was so expressed as to divide and distract, rather than conciliate, it seems courteous in an individual, or a minority, to withhold an appeal to the public to see what change a little time and reflection will produce.

But we take higher ground. Whatever right an individual may have as a man, and as an American, as a Presbyterian, he is bound by Presbyterian law and order. According to Presbyterian church order, if a document is rejected, or if an act is passed in opposition to the judgment of an individual, or of a minority, he or they have a right to enter a dissent, or even a protest, assigning the reasons of such dissent, and having them recorded upon the minutes of Presbytery or Synod; but they have no right given them to publish a document rejected by the deliberate vote of a church court; and much less has any member a right to form a party and appeal to the public, without recording the protest and the reasons on which it is based. They

have a right to dissent, and even to secede from the community of professors; but, while remaining among them, they have no right to follow a decisive course. It is contrary to Presbyterianism, and contrary to their engagements at ordination. They engage to submit to the courts in the Lord: but in this case there is not even a delay till the meeting of the *superior court*; but a minority, contrary to express judicial act, throw into the hands of the people a document condemned by Synod.

In opposition to the editor of the *Expositor*, it is asserted, that *they neither have such a right, nor any approved precedent*. The only precedent that will be plead is that of Dr. McLeod, chairman of the committee of correspondence, who published on *his own personal responsibility*, an address accompanying a report of the committee of which he was the chairman. That this punishes no precedent will appear from the following statements.

I. The conduct of Dr. McLeod, in that matter, was never judicially approved.

II. It never was offered to the court as the report of the committee, but as his own, and accompanying the document.

III. It never was given to the court with a view to publication, or their adoption; but simply as an argument to justify the report of the Committee.

IV. No act was passed that it should not be published.

V. The Doctor published it as his own, on his own responsibility, and neither took pecuniary aid from others in order to its publication, nor availed himself of the feelings or prejudices, or liberal views of others to have them committed along with himself. He endured the reproach, or took the credit alone, and did not lay a foundation for rending the church, or violating presbyterian church order, in an act of insubordination—And

VI. There was no higher court, than that before which the document was read, to which an appeal could be made. The contrary of all these is the matter of fact, in relation to the very singular document under review.—*The Anti-synodical Address*.

In the transactions of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, a transaction is recollected, illustrative of the above sentiment—viz. that no committee, or minority has a right to publish a document, however good, that by the majority is thought inexpedient, or uncalled for.

At a previous meeting of synod, a committee had been ap-

pointed to prepare a document on our civil relations with the United States. An able document was prepared, and read before synod at its sessions in 1830. Every member said he could subscribe every principle contained in the report—none dared at that time oppose it, (even “the learned author of the pastoral address,” said then, that he “did not know that there was one sentiment in it that he could not subscribe,”) but the majority thought it uncalled for under the then existing circumstances, and it was referred to a committee, who reported it as inexpedient to publish the document at present, or something to that effect.

The original committee was treated with little courtesy. Its labour was thrown away: the document was smothered; it was evidently put into the hands of the second committee, that it might never see the light. Of this fact the writer of this article is well aware, for deeming it uncalled for, he both knew that this was the object of others and himself, in adding to the committee.

A copy of that document was still in the hands of the former chairman. Why did he not publish it? Certainly, not because he thought the report useless or injurious, but simply that he determined to act as a presbyterian, to submit to the decision of the majority, and not rend the church. We hear of no expressions of wrath from that committee—we find no report foisted into the churches by their agency; but here is a document filled with insinuations, personal reflections, and stigmatizing all those who might differ from the sentiments therein contained as not thinking for themselves, having their consciences manufactured, and being led by a man under the influence of derangement. The notes do not seem intended, and certainly are not calculated to soothe the feelings, or remove the roughness of the invective in the rejected part of the pastoral letter; but rather to fix a charge of insanity on a distinguished member of the court, and give location to the terms “aspiring diotraphes—intolerance and fanaticism—illiberal vagaries of insanity and fanaticism—wild reveries of ignorance and enthusiasm—insinuations and foul misrepresentations of the prejudiced, pestilent, “designing and ambitious—and unprincipled and ambitious “demagogue,” &c. &c. which are embodied in that thing called a pastoral address.

These notes also give location to all the surly epithets con-

cerning the majority of synod, as led on by a man, such as the notes would represent him to be. They give location to such expressions as, having “consciences manufactured for you—“animated with an *infuriate zeal* for the extirpation of every “one who cannot articulate with sufficient distinctness their par-“ty shibboleth—men introducing novel doctrines—novel prac-“tices—disorganizing new light pedlars—disturbers of the good “order and harmony of Zion,” &c. &c.—but I forbear. A public document containing so much vituperation and ungenteel ribaldry, has never come under my observation. To use the language of its eulogist—“it is worthy of the high reputation of its learned author—we admire the magnanimity it displays.” Worthy of the high reputation! magnanimity! yes, it is in perfect keeping with his “*two sons of oil*,” on the opposite side of the question—written in the same spirit—a spirit which never did, and never can do any good.

So much for the general aspect of the document. Let us examine a few of its statements. In page 10th it thus states—“reflect on this truth, that the relation of our ecclesiastical community to the civil institutions of these United States, has never been a subject of definitive legislation in our judicatories.”

What do these gentlemen mean by definitive legislation? If it is meant that no final—no unalterable legislation has been enacted, then it is admitted. All our church deeds may be altered, and we feel bound to alter them whenever we ascertain them to be wrong; but if it is intended to convey the idea that no positive and express law has been enacted by the Reformed Presbyterian Church, stating the light in which it viewed the American government; and the duty of its members to abstain from taking any part in public affairs by voting, sitting on juries, &c. it is utterly denied.

In the year 1806, May 15th, the church enacted that its members *should not sit on juries, or vote at elections*. This is stated in the 1st edition of its testimony, pages 133—138, and certified by its official organs, who are yet living. It was always received as *common law* in that section of the church; which law, more than any other, prevented the increase of the covenanting church every where in these United States. There is not a congregation in all their connection, nor of any respectable connection in the land, living among covenanters, that did not view it as their common law; and it is well known that some of the

very men who tell us that there never has been any definitive legislation upon the subject, are the men who laid this grave-stone upon the church, of which they are so much ashamed, that, at this late day they come forward and tell us there was never such a law! verily, these are the new light pedlars, and not as they represent themselves in the Pastoral address, as “the *sober, discreet, temperate and intelligent part of the brethren, of vital godliness, and moral worth.*” These men need no trumpeters of their fame. They live in their own story.

Again it is said in page 9th, Original Pastoral Address, “various illiberal attempts, it must be admitted, have been made, to stamp as the Ordinance of the Devil, the best government on earth, &c.”

It is true that such attempts have been made in relation to this government, and by none so illiberal and violent, as by “the learned author” of the pastoral address. He is the leader in this iniquity, if iniquity it be. To him in a peculiar manner is the church indebted for her disgrace, if disgrace it is, to “stamp as the Ordinance of the Devil, the best government on earth.” He was the “manufacturer of factitious consciences.” Who has not read his “*sons of oil,*”? Who deserves best the appellation of a *new light pedlar*?

We are further told, page 10th, that “it is susceptible of demonstration that since the commencement of christianity, no government on earth has had a fairer claim to recognition as the ordinance of God, than that of these United States.”

Admit the American government to be the Ordinance of God, the truth of the above statement is questionable. It is admitted that no government of which we read, since the promulgation of christianity, has manifested so great a degree of republicanism. But republicanism, however important, *is not the main thing in constituting the ordinance of God.* Here it is thought the error lies. This is the prevailing mistake in our day. Forsooth, because our government is republican in its form, therefore it is the Ordinance of God! Had not France also a republican government, when the King was ejected and Bonaparte was first Consul? what then? was it therefore the ordinance of God? Who does not know that these French republicans *voted that there was no God?* Mere republicanism, therefore, is no evidence that either this is the ordinance of God, or that it has a higher claim to be recognized as the ordinance of God, than

the British nation at the time when it recognized the divine law as the supreme rule, and was as a nation in covenant with God.

It is perfectly easy to bluster about the excellencies of democracy—to shew the baseness of some men, who hypocritically professed attachment to the covenants—and who, to render them odious to the nation, by violence attempted to compel some to enter into the covenants of our fathers—to bring this charge against the innocent—and thus excite the prejudices of the multitude against both the nation and the covenants. This was done by the persecutors in days of old; but it is now too late to employ such means, with a hope of success in destroying a covenanted work of reformation. Whatever might have been the form of government in the nation, it was in covenant with God.

It is fearlessly asserted, that there is nothing in scripture to justify the belief that a people may not have a king, if they choose, instead of a President or First Consul. Kings have ruled with divine approbation. If the people choose them, it is their own business. If they approve of hereditary government, let them see to it. We admit their folly: but it does not destroy the moral character of the government. Rehobam was not too wise, yet he succeeded his father upon the throne. Israel's government was, notwithstanding, the ordinance of God. In a *merely political* point of view, *irrespective of God and his law*, it is admitted that this government has higher claims; but bring God and his law into the account, and before the profanation of their covenants, and papistical violation of the constitution, the British government had a superior claim to be accounted the ordinance of God. It formally acknowledged God and his law, as well as the Mediator, but this does neither. Some States may acknowledge God and his law, in some slight degree; but there is not one State that provides for setting aside its enactments when proven to be contrary to the Law of God. These United States, as such, *never did in any form* acknowledge God's law as paramount to every other—nor did any State in the union. Their Constitution says the very reverse, according to the comment of their own statesmen. See the Tripolitan treaty, as ratified by the President and Congress in 1797. “The government of the United States is not in any sense founded on the christian religion. It has in itself, no

“character of enmity against the laws or religion of Mussul-men.”

In page 10th, we are told to “weigh these circumstances candidly and see if you can find any thing *positively immoral* in the instrument lying at the foundation of that momentous transaction, and then reject it.”

The Reformed Presbyterian Church holds it to be immoral in any man to refuse or neglect to recognize, and publicly acknowledge God—that upon this principle Christ says, “whosoever is ashamed of me before men, of him will I be ashamed before my father and his Angels.” It is equally held to be a sin in nations, and their rulers of every grade, to refuse or neglect submission to God and his Son—and the Spirit of God seems to recognize this, when he says—“Be wise now therefore *O ye Kings*: be instructed ye *Judges* of the earth, *serve* the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be *angry*, and ye *perish* from the way, when his *wrath* is kindled *but a little*,” Psal. II. 10, 12. Our nation has, at least, neglected to obey this law; for most assuredly it has not even mentioned God, his Son, or his law in the general constitution. The learned author of the pastoral letter and notes used to know this, but has discovered a happy way of getting rid of the difficulty; for he tells us—page 27, Synod. Address, note D. that “a man is *still* a man, though he may be deficient in *an ear*, “or *an arm*, or have some *unsightly excrescence* growing upon “his person.”

By this it appears that a neglect of God &c. is a *small matter*, as an ear, an arm, or some *unsightly excrescence*! How much the gentleman has advanced in a respect for God and his law, all covenanters will judge from this specimen of *sound theological reasoning*. Some think that the “Boy,” thirty years ago, upon this subject, knew more than the full grown Doctor.

But we have yet another offset from the learned author’s pen. “There are entire books of the Bible, in which the name “of God is not found, but this does not destroy their divine authenticity.”

It is admitted that there are two books in the Bible, in which the name of God is not found; but fortunately we are not indebted to these clerical and lay brethren for the information. Thomas Paine and some other *very respectable theological wri-*

ters told us so several years since! We perceive some sense, and great wickedness in these men introducing that fact to view: but it is difficult to perceive the use of our brethren quoting this in the present controversy. Do they mean to say that the law of God, and the system of grace, and the duty of nations, are not called up to view—and that religion and morality are not inculcated in the books of Esther and the song of Solomon? Surely they do not mean this; and unless they do, it has no more to do with the argument, than to tell us that Homer was blind. No doubt “the learned author,” and his colleagues might furnish many texts in the Bible, in which the name of God, and the term law are not found, but will they therefore force upon the majority of Synod, that, according to our argument, the Bible is not the constitution of God’s kingdom? We do not contend that the constitution of the United States is immoral because *the name of God* is not introduced into *every section*, and his *law* mentioned in *every clause*; but that in *no section* are *either of them once mentioned*, or even *hinted at*. With Paine, and his kindred theologians, we would without the least hesitation discard the Bible, if in the whole of that book there was no mention of God, the mediator and his law.

After all, we are not sure that upon proof of *positive immorality* it follows that therefore a government is no more the ordinance of God. On this principle it is believed that it would be almost impossible to find the ordinance of God in any civil or ecclesiastical constitution among men. Yet these gentlemen authorise the members of the church to reject the American government if they can only discover positive immorality.

In page 11th, this very singular document states, that “the most obnoxious feature, indeed, we may say, the *only* obnoxious one—the existence of slavery, is rapidly *softening* in its unsightly aspect.”

Three things appear upon the face of this quotation.

I. That slavery is worse than the neglect of God and his law.
 II. That slavery is the only obnoxious feature in our constitution.

III. That it is rapidly softening in its unsightly aspect.

It will not be difficult to demonstrate that not one of these assertions is true. It admits of no dispute that God is not even mentioned in the United States’ constitution, nor one syllable concerning his holy law. It has been shown that God com-

mands the nations to kiss his son, and that it is immoral to neglect to acknowledge God—and we further observe, that this neglect of God's law is the very foundation of slavery; for, if it was recognized and enforced, the law, of the mediator, would forever set aside the slavery of unoffending men. A nation would then hear Christ saying, "whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye also the same to them; this is the Law and the Prophets." If the law of God and his Son would lead to this course, and it is rejected, then, such rejection is even worse than slavery. Owing to this rejection of the law of the Most High, not only is slavery permitted, but the slaveholder is constitutionally rewarded. He has votes (consequently influence in the general government) in proportion to the number of slaves in his possession. Three votes for every five slaves. This is rewarding and encouraging slavery.

It is no solid answer to this fact to say that they are also taxed in the same proportion—for

I. The Southern people considered it an advantage, notwithstanding the taxation, or they would not have stipulated for it, nor would the Northern have granted it, as a compromise:—

II. In the view of the divine law they are men, not property.—

III. It is a serious injury to the black man; for it throws so much more influence, in the general government, into the hands of his unholy master, thereby preventing any reformation on the subject of slavery.—

IV. It is not a permission of three slaves out of five to vote at the polls, (which yet would be too trifling to mention as a compensation for the loss of liberty) but a grant to the master to enjoy more of the privileges of a free man, because more deep in the iniquity of enslaving his fellow men, or his own children.

Nor is it true that "slavery is softening in its unsightly aspect. Slavery is not on the decrease—slaves are used with no more kindness—the general government has taken no measures to effect their entire emancipation—no compensation has been allowed them for the loss of their liberty—slaves are yet disposed of at public sale in the District of Columbia—even nominal covenanters are palliating the iniquity—and it yet remains constitutional law, that a free state must give up the poor African, who, instead of slaying his master, has fled to another state for protection. The constitution has been amended, but no change has been made in favour of the afflicted

son or daughter of Africa. It is no apology, no extenuation of the crime, to call them property, and say that as property they must be given up. It is much more like the conduct reprov'd in scripture—"When thou sawest a thing, thou joinedst with him in sin."

So far as slavery is concerned, it was an unholy alliance made for political purposes—irrespective of human rights, moral honesty, or divine law. When about to enter into a constitutional bond, and unite as sovereign states to protect and defend each other, the questions were, shall we unite? and on what terms?

"All men are born free and equal," says the declaration of independence. To hold unoffending men in bondage is immoral—for say the scriptures, "What ye would that others should do to you, do ye the same to them: this is the law and the prophets." Well, be it so, is the language of the northern, eastern, and middle states; of two evils we must choose the least. These are the only terms on which the south will unite with us, and we will rather violate the law of God, practically deny the declaration of independence, and send back the poor captive to his thralldom, than want this Union. To the God who freed them from the hand of a powerful enemy, they could not confide for protection, but formed a union on a principle as *immoral* as it is *opposed to human rights*.

We hear of the *Holy Alliance* in Europe; but European despots are entirely eclipsed by enlightened Americans! Here is an alliance sealed by the slavery of more than two millions of Africans—at the expense of their degradation as men—and often at the expense of the life both of body and soul. Such is our christian land! What an outcry is raised about the imprisonment of *two missionaries*, and how silent about the degradation of *two millions, ten thousand, four hundred and thirty-six slaves!!!* Yet are we, told by twelve ecclesiastics, calling themselves covenanters, that slavery is rapidly softening in its unsightly aspect!

As Dr. Willson can suffer nothing from the publication of the offensive note in page 20th, we give it in the words as published by the minority of Synod.

"Amplly sufficient has been quoted to give a *definite location* to these and similar allusions of the address. All the remarks that the subscribers of this document see fit to make upon the

subject is—“That they thus *publicly disclaim all responsibility* for the obnoxious sentiments contained in the publication referred to, and express their unqualified reprobation of the inconsistent, partial, and erroneous statements with which it is replete. The *mental alienation* under which its author labours, divests him of all personal responsibility. And as this has now become notorious, there is little danger that *the ravings of insanity* will be mistaken for the expressions of truth and holiness. This infirmity was once the occasion of an ecclesiastical process by which he was debarred from the exercise of his functions as a preacher of the Gospel, and if he has not recently been made the subject of judicial cognizance, it is to be attributed to the tender, yet perhaps culpable sympathies of his brethren.”

For several years the writer of this document has been acquainted with Dr. Willson. With his public character he has been long acquainted; for the Doctor's name has, for at least fifteen years, been associated with the Reformed Presbyterian Church as one of her most distinguished champions. It is now too late to attempt to destroy his character by a calumnious libel of insanity; and a generous public will not sustain the slang, that a majority of that church which has sacrificed worldly honours and the rewards of office, that they might support a good conscience, are so weak-minded, and thoughtless, as to follow an insane leader in a measure both novel and sinful.

That they are fallible men, and liable to be mistaken, they will readily admit; but that *new ground is assumed*, every candid man who has read their testimony, and the defence of that testimony by Doctors McLeod, McMaster, Black, and Wylie, must deny, even though it should be asserted by twelve Presbyters.

On the showing of the authors of the address and notes, it is evident that they consider the statements in “Prince Messiah,” concerning President Washington, as no way affecting the main question concerning the character of the American government (see note 6th, page 21st, where they say—“If the allegation were true, it effects nothing for the main argument;”) and on the same principle, to prove the insanity of Dr. Willson, and the weakness of the intellect of his followers, whose consciences he has unfortunately manufactured, will not affect the question in dispute. They know it does not. Why then unneces-

sarily vituperate their own ecclesiastical connection ; and why (even if it were true) tell the world that Dr. Willson was insane? and why, on the credit of twelve Presbyters, leave the impression that he is always insane, and that he is “*divested of all personal responsibility?*”

It is most astonishing that men of talent, and high theological standing, should condescend, in this way, to an act which should make an Ethiopian blush. Such an attack from twelve deists is sufficient to make humanity blush for ages ; but when it is publicly made by his fellow professors, with whom he has held communion for nearly thirty years, and along with whom he has been in the habit of sealing his covenant with God, in giving and receiving the sacramental pledge—who were bound in all good conscience, as men, as church members, and as church officers, to defend each others reputation—for these men to denounce a fellow creature on account of a visitation of God, and hold him up as a *lunatic*, while yet of regular standing as a church member and minister, and as a preacher decidedly more popular than any or all of them, seems more than strange. Humanity weeps over it.

Nor is this all. They admit that this man has been retained in the communion though confessedly deranged. Nor does it appear, from *any public document*, that any discovery was made of this derangement while he could be imposed upon to support their ecclesiastical policy, nor until he became a formidable antagonist in the defence of the *old practices*, and published principles of these very men—the authors of the anti-synodical address. It certainly seems strange that an adherence to the *principle* [note A.*] contained in the act prohibiting voting and sitting on juries, declared and defended by Dr. Wylie, in his “Sons of Oil”—Dr. McLeod, in the second of his war sermons, and Dr. McMaster, in his “Duty of Nations,” should be an evidence of Dr. Willson’s derangement, and the above sermons, exhibiting and supporting the same views, should not be an evidence of *their insanity!* But upon the testimony of these men it proves Dr. Willson’s insanity, therefore the community are at liberty to believe, that these very liberal gentlemen were, at least, *once insane*.

As the “Duty of Nations”—“War Sermons”—and “Sons of Oil,” may not be as industriously and extensively circulated as “the original draft and notes,” a few selections are made from

each, to introduce the reader to the harmony in sentiment originally subsisting between their authors and Dr. Willson. Our first quotations are from the "Duty of Nations." [Note B.*]

Page 16th, 5th line from the bottom of the page.

"From his hand (Messiah's) the law should be received. If his law be not received he cannot be obeyed. If his authority be rejected, after the command of obedience is proclaimed, *"rebellion marks their conduct who do so, and the portion of rebels is what they deserve."*

Page 18th, "The law of the Saviour of men should never be forgotten, 'whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' This is the law of benevolence—of equity not to be violated but by trampling on the remonstrances of conscience, and rejecting the authority of the Redeemer impressed on his statutes. Of no right should man be deprived unless he shall have forfeited it by crime. That nation has but feeble claims to virtuous illumination—to generosity—to justice,—which tolerates, not to mention authorizing the merciless practice of robbing a fellow mortal of all that is valuable to him in life, *his liberty*. How inconsistent to establish laws to punish with severity yonder plunderer of your sheep-fold, and by the same authority enact statutes to justify him in forcibly degrading his brother from the rank of man, and in plundering him of what is more precious to him than life."

Page 22d.

In the first part of the page the Dr. declares the infidelity of being indifferent toward the church of God. In the middle, he states the proper character to be trusted with civil affairs—and in the latter clause, of the same paragraph, are the following words.

"As it is doubtless a duty to make such a selection, so it is equally incumbent to made these moral and religious qualifications a *constitutional condition of eligibility to office*. In vain do men inveigh against the profanity and impiety of public characters, while *silent respecting the constitution by which they are eligible*. If a constitution of government exclude the scriptures of truth from being the rule of the nation, in managing national affairs—if it bind the hand of rulers, in their official standing, from shewing any more regard to the religion of Christ, than to the delusions of Mahomet, why should the framers thereof,—why should the approvers thereof declaim against

* See Notes.

"the man who is constitutionally qualified when invested with office?"

"A greater inconsistency in human conduct can scarcely be found, than men solemnly pledging themselves, either personally or by representation, to maintain inviolate a constitution which rejects the law of God, and *requires no profession of religion* to qualify for office under it, and at the same time reprobating the officers of government for irreligion. If these reformers be *sincere*, let them begin at the fountain head—let the constitutions of the land be purified from infidelity—let a national mark of disapprobation be set upon impiety—till this be done let them stand at a distance from sanctioning immoral deeds; then with consistency may they reprove national immorality. *On every other ground*, either *their sincerity* or *discernment* may be justly disputed.

Page 38th, foot note.

"In the United States all have an establishment, as well the believer in, and worshiper of the Virgin Mary, as the worshiper of Jesus."

Page 41st, foot note.

"In the laws of our States respecting these things there is a glaring inconsistency. That our Redeemer is God is a truth, and that open image worship is a crime, is as evidently revealed, as that the first day of the week should be observed in a religious manner. A denial of the first, and an open practice of the second, are doubtless as pernicious as a violation of the sabbath by attending to usual secular employments. These employments are lawful on other days: idolatry and blasphemy never are. Where is the consistency in restraining from doing on the sabbath what is lawful on common days, and to protect in the commission of crime at no time lawful? The man who profanes the name of any person of the trinity in common life will be punished; but if under the pretext of religious principle he blasphemes the character of Jesus, and profane the oracles of heaven by attempting to make them prove the Saviour no more than a mortal man, he passes not only without censure, but has a right guaranteed him so to do."

From "the war sermons" published by Dr. M'Leod, sermon 2d. we select a few paragraphs, shewing also the coincidence between Drs. M'Leod and Willson, with respect to the United State's government.

Page 53d.

"The constitutions of government, as reduced to practice, are the proper objects of examination. To these, as it respects the two belligerents, I now direct your attention, while I place them in the ballances in the name of the Judge of the world. I begin at home with,

I. The national government of the United States.

"The sins of a nation is the aggregate of all the transgressions committed by individuals in that nation, but these are properly *national sins*, which are *notorious, prevalent, and characteristic*. I speak not, however, of the nation at large, but of its *constituted authorities*, and therefore attend only to authorized sins."

Page 54th.

"The public immoralities of the constitution of the federal government, may, although more numerous in detail, be classed under two heads, viz. *Disrespect for God*—and *violation of human liberty*."

By the terms of the national compact, God is not acknowledged, and holding men in slavery is authorised. Both of these are evils.

1. *God is not acknowledged in the constitution.*

In concluding the argument on this position, in page 55th, the Dr. employs the following language—"But no consideration will justify the framers of the federal constitution, and the administration of the government, in withholding a recognition of the Lord and his Anointed, from the grand charter of the nation. On our daily bread we ask a blessing. At our ordinary meals, we acknowledge the Lord of the world, we begin our last testament for disposing of worldly estates, in the name of God: and shall we be guiltless, with the Bible in our hands, to disclaim the christian religion as a body politic?"

In a foot note, Page 56th, the Dr. says that they have disclaimed the christian religion in these words. "The government of the United States is not in any sense, founded on the christian religion. It has in itself, no character of enmity against the laws or religion of Mussulmen."

Tripolitan Treaty, Art. 11. U. S. laws, vol. IV. He adds—

"This treaty, ratified in the year 1797, was thereby made the supreme law of the land." Cons. Art. 6. sec. 2. Here he represents the united U. States as *telling its own character*—that it is not christian.

Page 56, he says—

“The *constitution* of our government recognizes the practice “of *holding men* without being convicted of any offence against “society, *in perpetual slavery.*” To establish this position he “quotes the constitution of the United States, Art. I. sec. 9, “clause 1.—and constitution, art. I. sect. 2, clause 3.

Almost every page of “the Sons of Oil” carries us to the extent of Dr. Willson’s “Prince Messiah,” if we except the mention of General Washington’s religious opinions: and some think, that Mr. Wylie did not flatter dignitaries in those days, any more than Dr. Willson does now. Be that as it may, we shall strive to *do justice* to the Doctor, by furnishing a *sample* to shew the doctrines he taught for the purpose of “manufacturing consciences.”

Sons of Oil—page 10th.

“Civil government does not, as some modern politicians affirm, *originate* either *in the people* as its *fountain*, or in the “vices consequent upon the fall.”

Page 20.

“They agree (civil and ecclesiastical authority) in being “both *bound* to take the moral law as the unerring standard of “*all their administrations.*”

In assigning the reasons why covenanters *cannot yield submission for conscience sake*, to the *present civil authority* in North America—he says, in

Page 46.

“The federal constitution, or instrument of national union, “does not even recognize the existence of God, the King of nations.” Same page—“most, if not all, of the State constitutions contain positive immorality.”

Page 47,

“The government gives a *legal security* and *establishment* to “gross heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, under the notion of “liberty of conscience.”

In page 48, he utters a severe philippic against the secession church for differing from him on that subject.

Page 51. Speaking of the constitution of Pennsylvania, the Dr. says {“we cannot in conscience (however others may look upon it) *swear allegiance* to a constitution, so friendly to the enemies of Jesus. We are bound to him and cannot serve two “masters.”

Page 53. "They make no provision for the interest of true religion. See federal constitution, art. 3. amendment."

Page 55. "Another reason, why we cannot fully incorporate with the national society, is because we consider them in a state of *national rebellion against God*."

Page 56. "Deists, and even Atheists may be chief magistrates. See the federal constitution."

He attempts to prove it by two arguments.

I. That "an *affirmation* is admitted in place of an oath of office."

II. That "in 1797 the good people of the Western States centred by representation in the senatorial council, and chief magistrate, *disclaimed the religion of Jesus*, in the ratification of the treaty of peace and friendship with the Bey of Tripoli." After quoting the words of the treaty, (as stated above in the quotation from Dr. McLeod's war sermon) the rev. gentleman adds—"and what is farther worthy of notice, by the sixth article of the federal constitution, this treaty is made the supreme law of the land."

Page 62. This modern reformer states what should be our conduct toward this government. "We ought to do no act, which may be justly considered an homologation of their *illegitimate authority*." He proceeds to specify what *acts* might be justly considered an homologation of their *illegitimate authority*. He mentions four acts.

I. An oath of allegiance. "No oath of allegiance therefore can we swear."

II. Electing public functionaries. "We cannot elect public functionaries to fill the various offices in the State."

III. "Nor accept of an office to which an oath is annexed."

IV. "Nor sit on Juries."—Page 63.

In answering the objection concerning oaths, holding deeds of land &c., the gentleman proceeds to shew by a course of reasoning, in pages 81–83 inclusive, that they constitute *no homologation of the constitution of the land*—no approbation of the government, or recognition of its authority.

The reading of the book is recommended to all covenanters—not as being an expose of their principles; nor as fixing the law of their church; nor as being all true; but to see how very far, in almost every important position, a man may differ from himself—and how harmonious his former grand points of discussion

are with those in "Prince Messiah"—and to see how bitter a man can be against *his own pupil*, whose conscience he has some reason to believe he has *manufactured*.

The above quotations are given for the purpose of shewing that Dr. Willson has not assumed new principles, nor recommended novel practices—that his brethren, defending the old cause, are neither "disorganizers" nor "new light pedlars," and that if the pamphlet entitled "Prince Messiah" evinces derangement, then Doctors McMaster, McLeod, and Wylie *were insane* at the time when their books were written: but it is a comfortable reflection that they are *now free from mental alienation*!

Let us again turn our attention to the pamphlet under review. An extraordinary item in the notes accompanying "the original draft," is, that a *private publication* of Dr. Willson, for which he only was responsible, should be introduced, and, at least, by insinuation, hold those presbyters who form the majority of Synod accountable for its contents; as if that pamphlet, or its principles were the reason of voting down the rejected part of the address. It is well known that the vote of some of that majority, was not based either upon the principles of Dr. Willson's pamphlet, or any of the reasonings therein; but that, in their judgment, it was uncalled for—argued only one side of the question—implicated, in ungenteel inuendo, those who differed from the writer of the instrument—and was calculated to produce distraction in, and ultimately rend the church. Who does not know that some of that majority always abhorred the *old act* concerning juries, voting, &c., and blamed *the leading men* for imposing unnecessary burdens upon the people, and afterwards had not sufficient magnanimity to disannul, by a direct act, a law so useless, and one that has been productive of so much evil: yet there, is not one qualifying phrase, either in the original draft or notes appended to save them from indiscriminate condemnation. Why call up "Prince Messiah" in this controversy? who plead for it in Synod? who opposed the address because "Prince Messiah" was apposed to its principles, reasonings, declamation, and insult? And do not these "sober, temperate, discreet, intelligent brethren—the men of vital godliness and moral worth" know that Dr. Willson is "*insane, a Diotraphes, pestilent, prejudiced, a fanatic, manufacturer of consciences, ambitious demagogue, and new light pedlar*"!! Why introduce this man? Why should *twelve sane members of Synod* condescend to his pamphlet!

It appears to have been a trick, not unlike that in the delegation synod of 1831, when the question under discussion was, the abandoning of the delegation system so far as it referred to the attendance of ministers. The report of a committee on the proper mode of ordaining elders and deacons was thrust into the discussion for no conceivable purpose, but to throw up a blind before elders and ministers, as if the object in breaking down the delegation was to carry the question about the imposition of hands. We hear something about this, in the "Christian Expositor," as if some *great achievement had been accomplished* concerning the non-imposition of hands. The public will best judge of the *extraordinary success* of the gentlemen, when we inform them that the subject was not discussed, but at once laid on the table of Synod, and never yet called up, and that there was not one person opposed to the measure. It was dragged in *for effect*, and opposed by some men as if it were an enormous matter; but a single member of Synod did not speak one word in its favour. It was lying on the table, and not called up. It is so still.

But about this "mental alienation." It is impossible to account satisfactorily for such a statement from such a quarter. To use an expression quoted in a former page—"their *sincerity or discernment* may be *justly disputed*."

Did they find him treated as an insane man? Did they not know that the Assembly of the State of New-York, composed of about one hundred and sixty men, the representatives of the State, and *supposed to be sane*, spent nearly two days in legislating upon this man and his pamphlet, in the very place where he lived, and where they might have known of his insanity, had there existed such a fact? Were they ignorant of the fact, that almost every editor of a public political print in the Union, took notice of the conduct of the Assembly in relation to this *insane production* which gave so much offence? And if insane, why *twelve ecclesiastics write a book against him*? Query. Where is the greatest evidence of insanity? Is it in Dr. Willson's writing a book coinciding with the sentiments of "the Sons of Oil"—"Duty of Nations"—and "War Sermons"—or in twelve Presbyters writing a book against a madman? The public will judge.

It really does appear that they do not seriously believe in his "alienation of mind," and that he is "destitute of all personal

responsibility." It is generally admitted that he walks the streets of Albany without a strait jacket—is considered perfectly harmless, and endangers no man's life, not even the lives of those *dear, kind, good, culpably sympathizing brethren*, who have dealt so *tenderly* with him. "Tender, yet perhaps culpable sympathies of his brethren!!" As a rare exemplification of their *tenderness* and *sympathy*, let any honest man read the last paragraph of note B. original draft.

But it seems that this *kind, tender* course must be abandoned. The man has become *dangerous*—his writings are read—a *hundred and sixty* legislators think him *worthy of notice, censure, and proscription*. Editors tell of the man—his pamphlet—the magnanimity of the State Legislature in their dealings with him—and it requires twelve Presbyters to publish a book and write him into contempt; while yet they find they cannot succeed unless they lay aside their *tender sympathies*, and tell the world he is deranged!

We might here retort, in the style of page 21st. original Synodical Address—"And among other modes of reasoning employed to sustain a position which was evidently felt to be untenable, reference is had to *private character* and *personal opinions*," that "these being proved by a kind of sophistical and ad captandum argument," they may hide the deformity of that policy which they prepared for the church, advocated in their public discourses, and for the reception of which they have been in the habit of manufacturing consciences.

After all, this is a serious business. What if any of the relations of these authors of note B should become deranged? what if they themselves should yet become subject to "*mental alienation*,"? would they think it honourable in any man to publish it through the medium of the press, and speak lightly and reproachfully of a visitation of God? Should Dr. Willson publish such an article in his "Quarterly," there is not one of his brethren would publish a line in defence of his character. They would admit his insanity, from a conviction, that otherwise, he could not condescend to such meanness and sinfulness. To preserve his credit, they would admit him insane.

That Dr. Willson, by intense study, in the exercise of a gigantic mind, has been under God's hand; and that the church did right (some twenty years since) in preventing him, for a time, while a licentiate, from preaching the gospel, Dr. Willson

himself and his brethren will admit; but that he wrote the "Prince Messiah" in a fit of mental alienation, or that he is habitually so, they must in truth and conscience deny: but no other construction can be put upon the expression, "the mental alienation under which its author labours, divests him of all personal responsibility."

What could be the object in making so violent an attack upon Dr. Willson? Can it be to prostrate the reputation of *a godly man* [note C.*]—a christian minister of no mean standing? To deprive a helpless family of bread, by shaking the confidence of the church in his integrity or sanity—or that of the citizens of Albany, so that they may withdraw their sons and daughters from his seminary? Is it sheer malice? Or, rather, is it not that they would *court the world, at whatever expense*, and shield themselves from the reproach connected with their *former publications*? They may account for it the best way they can to God, and their own *unmanufactured* consciences.

It was certainly a mistaken course in those of that minority who had committed themselves in print before the public. Who will not now inquire for "the Sons of Oil," War Sermons," and "Duty of Nations?" Covenanters, at least, will read them, and in them will also perceive that their authors once, and Dr. Willson now, are agreed. It is very questionable whether the civil community will judge these men *better republicans*, or more *honest men*, than when they told them their faults.

In conclusion, it is stated most honestly, that although the writer hereof is not embroiled as a partizan in the present contest agitating the Reformed Presbyterian Church, yet he sincerely regrets having been laid under the necessity of saying hard things concerning men who have long ranked high in the church of God: but he could not stand by, and suffer a fellow professor, and an honest minister, to be reproached with all the *bitter epithets* to which note B. gives *locality*. He views it as an *insult* to the *majority of Synod*, as they seem to be represented as led by a deranged man into acts of infuriate zeal. Perhaps the style is not sufficiently mild, but he thinks it is, at least, as much so as that of the pamphlet to which it replies. He only is responsible for every word. His name accompanies it. He states facts, and *nothing but facts*, according to the best of his judgment. He has nothing to apprehend from the gentle-

man who cautions us to "Beware!" for Dr. Wylie will condescend to fight with neither small nor great, but with the king of Israel only. Should he look down upon us in *a kind letter* through the magazine, he will find us at our posts. "Great is the truth, and it will prevail."

ROBERT GIBSON.

New-York, Nov. 8th, 1832.

NOTES.

Note A. Why refuse to let covenanters vote, sit on juries, &c. for so many years? It must be something, in their judgment, *fundamentally wrong* in the *government* of the land. This is not a mere difference of views in the *application of principle*. Had they recognized the government as the ordinance of God, or even a good ordinance of man, the church had not been so long trammelled. However far Dr. Willson may have pressed the subject, the quotations given in the former pages show, that they have gone as far, if not farther, with the exception of a reference to Washington's religion. They, however, have this to account for, not that they have been taught these sentiments by Dr. Willson, but that they taught Dr. Willson to relinquish, for conscience sake, his natural rights as a citizen. The Doctor was born a citizen. They were foreigners.

Note B. It is with regret that the name of Dr. McMaster has been introduced, or any quotation from his "Duty of Nations," as he is, by the writer of this document, viewed as an honourable man. And it is strongly suspected that it must have been without his *knowledge* or *consent* that the offensive paragraph in page 20th, original Synodical Address, ever saw the light. From what is known of the Doctor, it is believed he is above such *little conduct*, and besides, that he has too much good sense not to know that the baseness of such an attack would injure even a good cause. His name and writings are introduced merely to show, that with the exception of the personal attack upon the late rulers, he has written in favour of the *principle* assumed by Dr. Willson, in his "Prince Messiah," and that the Essay can be no evidence of Dr. Willson's derangement.

The most that can be said is, that it was *indiscreet* to say a word against the *idol* of the American nation. If information has been furnished to demonstrate that there has been *one pious ruler at the helm* of affairs in the United States, in that information Dr. Willson will rejoice. His whole object seems to be to urge upon the people the duty of electing such men.

Note C. "A godly man." *When* is Doctor Willson ever supposed to be under an excitement of mind? and what is *the cause* of such excitement?

His greatest enemy cannot say that he, at any time, under such influence, preaches against the standards of his church—swears profanely—gets drunk—encourages others in the neglect of duty, or omits the zealous discharge of his own duty—prays less, or is less fervent. No. The contrary of these are the symptoms by which these *tender* brethren suspect him. Is he insane? has he ever been? Who will dare to say that he brought it upon himself by *luxury, intemperance, or immorality* of life? Those who know him best esteem Dr. Willson a godly man.

